United Nations A/C.1/53/PV.28

General Assembly
Fifty-third session

Official Records

First Committee

28th Meeting
Thursday, 12 November 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 80 (*continued*)

Action on all draft resolutions submitted under all items

The Chairman: We have been able to obtain an additional meeting this afternoon. After consultations with various delegations, and in the light of other important events taking place in this building, we decided this morning to modify today's programme. Informal paper number 6, which is before the Committee, contains a list of all the draft resolutions remaining for consideration, except draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 and its seven associated amendments. Postponements have already been requested for draft resolutions A/C.1/53/L.11, L.53, L.64, L.16/Rev.1 and L.24/Rev.1, and for document A/C.1/53/L.51, which is an amendment to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.24/Rev.1.

We still have three draft resolutions to consider this morning: A/C.1/53/L.42 and its amendment, A/C.1/53/L.54; A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1; and A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): We have been in discussions with our colleagues from the United States and the Russian Federation on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1. They have attempted to address some of the concerns we expressed regarding that text, but, unfortunately, we did not see the new language until this morning and would need to study it before being in a position to vote on that draft resolution. Accordingly, we would ask for a postponement.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): We are still in the process of consultation on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.42. I hope that the Japanese delegation will come up with a new, revised text this afternoon or evening. I therefore request that action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.42 be postponed.

Mr. Al-Hassan (Oman): At what I know is a very critical time in the work of this Committee, I do not want to make an intervention that is cumbersome to you, Mr. Chairman, or to those delegations that are negotiating on some of the pending draft resolutions that are subject to voting in this Committee. However, it seems that a process of postponement is going on. On the basis of the information we had been given — which is not final, because it is subject to negotiation on the other draft resolutions — we understood that this morning we would be taking action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. Since this matter is of great importance to my delegation and, I believe, to many others, we have made certain arrangements, including the presence of our Permanent Representatives at these meetings.

I do not wish to prejudge the work. I know, Mr. Chairman, that you are trying to be as flexible as possible, which is the nature of this Committee, and I believe it should be followed through. However, when draft resolutions are to be postponed, we should be informed in advance. I was of the understanding that this morning I would be voting on A/C.1/53/L.22 and the amendments to it.

That is all I wish to say at this stage. I apologize if I am complicating your work, Mr. Chairman. That is not my intention.

98-86388 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation does not want to complicate your job either, Mr. Chairman. We have reached a very delicate stage in the Committee's work. However, my delegation has a few concerns about draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1. Consultations are still under way, and it does not seem that there has been any agreement on the outstanding issues. My delegation would therefore ask that consideration of that draft resolution be postponed.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Committee for its cooperation. It is by proceeding in this manner that we will make progress. We have no more draft resolutions, then, for this morning.

I again appeal to delegations to reconsider requests for postponements. We are less than 48 hours from the end of the work of this Committee. I would like members to ponder seriously whether their requests for postponements are really warranted. We have more than a hundred delegations here —

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I think that our colleague from Oman has raised a valid point with regard to the manner in which the Committee is proceeding to deal with various draft resolutions. The Committee under normal circumstances seeks to deal with those draft resolutions on which there is the largest possible convergence of positions, and puts off to a later date those that are controversial and on which negotiations are ongoing, or for which there remains a possibility of obtaining a better result than an outcome dictated by voting and procedural actions.

If those criteria are applied, I believe we should select from among the remaining draft resolutions those on which there is the greatest convergence and proceed to act on them, thereafter coming to other motions or proposals on which there is a wider divergence. Time is running out, and we have to take action, but that action should be dictated by certain criteria: let us act on the easier draft resolutions first and put off to a later stage those that are more difficult.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): No one is more aware than the Chairman that we are approaching the end of our work, that there are two very difficult draft resolutions to be negotiated, and that we have three meetings remaining for this work.

There is the possibility that this morning's meeting, which should have allowed us to vote on relatively well-advanced draft resolutions, will have served no purpose. I therefore propose to suspend the meeting to allow the delegations that have asked for postponement of action on draft resolutions A/C.1/53/L.42, L.49 and L.4 to consult and see whether it would be possible this morning, after the suspension, at least to consider those three draft resolutions.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.45 a.m.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Thanks to the goodwill of delegations, we will be able this morning to consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1, entitled "Bilateral nuclear arms negotiations and nuclear disarmament". The draft resolution belongs in cluster 1, on nuclear weapons.

Does any delegation wish to make a general statement on cluster 1?

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): I just want to make it clear to you, Sir, that we had been in discussions with both the United States of America and the Russian Federation on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49. Neither the United States nor the Russian Federation had informed us of their decisions on the outcome of those discussions.

This morning, we discovered that the request was that we should take up draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1, without the South African delegation's being given the opportunity of even seeing the language which it was expected to vote upon, because draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1 was distributed only this morning. We would certainly encourage not only these sponsors, but all other sponsors as well, when such situations arise, to attempt to approach them in a different way.

We have had a look at the language and are willing to continue and, as we have discussed privately, to allow the vote on the draft resolution to take place this morning without a requirement to study the language any further than we have already. We do this in a gesture of flexibility directed to you personally, Sir, and in full consideration of the difficulties which you face — and we know the difficulties that you face with regard to time in this Committee. Under normal circumstances, we would have required more time to study the text of this draft resolution.

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The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of South Africa for his cooperation.

I call on the representative of the United States of America to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1.

Mr. Grey (United States of America): On behalf of my own country, the Russian Federation and the other sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49, I would like to introduce the revised version of that draft resolution — in document A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1 — and explain the changes we have made to the original text.

In operative paragraph 8, we have added the words "takes note of the initiative" before the last part of the paragraph, which deals with the possibility of establishing a multilateral pre-launch notification regime. Since this paragraph mentions possible actions by countries other than the original sponsors, some delegations preferred a more neutral reference. We have attempted to meet this preference with the revised language.

As compared to last year's resolution, this year the sponsors have removed the reference to nuclear weapons in what is now operative paragraph 6. The sponsors explained that those words were deleted to take account of the fact, noted in operative paragraph 5, that nuclear weapons have been completely removed from Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. We have also pointed out that the concept of eliminating nuclear weapons has already found a place in operative paragraph 11. However, in order to make it unmistakably clear that the sponsors have no intention of going back on commitments we have made and which were reflected in last year's resolution, we have added additional language on eliminating nuclear weapons to the text of operative paragraph 11.

The sponsors hope that, with these changes, draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1 will receive the broadest possible support.

The Chairman: The Committee will now proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1.

As no delegation wishes to speak in explanation of vote before the vote, I give the floor to the Secretary of the Committee to conduct the voting.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1, entitled "Bilateral nuclear arms negotiations and nuclear disarmament", was introduced by the representative of the United States of America at this meeting.

In addition to the sponsors listed in the revised draft resolution, an additional sponsor is listed in document A/C.1/53/INF/2/Add.3, which has just been distributed. The following country has also become a sponsor: Portugal.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

None

Abstaining:

Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon, Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Republic of Tanzania

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1 was adopted by 136 votes to none, with 8 abstentions.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. Changhe Li (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1. China attaches great importance to the nuclear disarmament of the United States and Russia, as they are the two biggest nuclear-weapon States and their nuclear disarmament has a big impact on international peace and security. We hope the United States and Russia will continue to make efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and, as soon as possible, ratify the treaties on the reduction of nuclear weapons and launch START III. It must also be emphasized that reducing the number of nuclear warheads should mean their destruction rather than removal from deployed status to stockpiles.

The Chinese delegation notes that the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty is mentioned in the draft resolution, and its importance is emphasized. We hope the countries concerned will abide by its provisions and not carry out research and development on highly capable theatre missile defence systems with a strategic defensive capability, so as to avoid disrupting the global strategic balance and stability or starting a new round in the arms race.

I also wish to point out that the wording of operative paragraph 8 with regard to examining the possibility of establishing a multilateral ballistic missile and space launch vehicle pre-launch notification regime exceeds the scope of the draft resolution.

Mr. Soutar (United Kingdom): I have asked for the floor with respect to draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1, on bilateral nuclear arms negotiations and nuclear disarmament, on which the Committee has just taken action. The United Kingdom strongly supports this draft resolution and the many important steps and initiatives towards nuclear disarmament already taken or envisaged by the United States and the Russian Federation, as well as by Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

For its part, the United Kingdom has made it clear that when satisfied with progress towards the goal of nuclear disarmament we will ensure that our remaining nuclear weapons are included in multilateral negotiations. In the meantime, the United Kingdom is actively taking unilateral national measures. The last preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1 briefly acknowledges such steps. However, we consider that, in addition to our ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in April this year, the steps we announced in July this year are of particular significance. Since I have already spelt out the main elements of that announcement in an earlier statement during this session, I will not repeat them in full now, but will only recall that they included significant reductions in the total number of our operationally available warheads and of the warheads carried by each submarine, which will operate at a reduced state of readiness; publishing details of all our defence stocks of fissile material; and placing over 50 per cent of our unsafeguarded plutonium and all reprocessing and enrichment operations under international safeguards.

We consider that these represent substantial steps on the part of the United Kingdom towards the goal of nuclear disarmament, to which, let me repeat again lest any delegation still be in any doubt, the United Kingdom remains wholly and firmly committed.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation welcomes any unilateral, bilateral or multilateral efforts towards reducing nuclear arsenals. However, we abstained in the voting on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1, for the following reasons.

First, while an overwhelming majority of States insist on international negotiations on nuclear disarmament, some nuclear-weapon States speak solely of reduction and even insist that this issue is best left to bilateral negotiations among the nuclear-weapon States themselves. The nuclear threat is real. The very existence of nuclear weapons menaces the fate of mankind. Therefore, nuclear disarmament is an international concern and should not be confined to bilateral negotiations. The nuclear-weapon States should not remain indifferent to the profound concern of the international community.

Secondly, there is no recognition in the draft resolution of the role of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole negotiating body in the field of disarmament.

Thirdly, there are other elements in the draft resolution that my delegation has no means of substantiating

or verifying, such as the fourteenth preambular paragraph, which refers to the significant reductions made by other nuclear-weapon States, as well as other similar references in the draft resolution.

Fourthly, bilateral negotiations on nuclear reduction were a great achievement in the cold-war period. However, in the aftermath of the cold war, with the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, there remains no justification for the exclusion of the absolute majority of members of the United Nations from negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Benítez Verson (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1 continues to suffer the serious weaknesses we have raised year after year in this Committee without persuading the principal sponsors to take into account our main concerns. Despite last-minute cosmetic changes, we had before us once again a watered-down text praising the nuclear Powers for supposed great progress in the area of nuclear disarmament and clearly lacking a critical and objective focus on the true situation in this priority area.

This is not the way to make the progress that the international community would like us to make towards the goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons as quickly as possible. In addition, the bilateral and multilateral approach in negotiations on nuclear weapons cannot be exclusive; there must be complementarity within the context of an overall strategy for nuclear disarmament. This approach is not reflected in the draft resolution that has just been adopted.

For these reasons, the delegation of Cuba once again abstained in the vote on the draft resolution which is this year contained in document A/C.1/53/L.49/Rev.1.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): My delegation appreciates the efforts being made by the leading nuclear-weapon States to make progress towards nuclear disarmament.

The Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament recognizes the importance of nuclear reductions being made by the two leading nuclear-weapon States, and their responsibility. However, we were not able to join in supporting the draft resolution, for several reasons.

First, by the fifth preambular paragraph the General Assembly would appreciate the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This indefinite extension of the NPT has been construed by some of the nuclear-weapon States concerned with this draft resolution as implying their right to the indefinite extension of possession of nuclear weapons. We believe that this is an unjustified interpretation of the extension of the NPT.

Secondly, we note that in this context, as elsewhere in the draft resolution, there is no reference to the goal of complete nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Thirdly, in the tenth preambular paragraph there is a reference to a joint statement by the United States and the Russian Federation "in connection with the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty)". We have certain reservations with regard to the interpretations that have now been made of the Treaty that would allow the installation of theatre missile defence systems which we believe will be highly destabilizing for regional as well as global nuclear balance.

Fourthly, the draft resolution welcomes the significant reductions in nuclear weapons. It does not note, however, that these reductions have been made from very high numbers and that the numbers of nuclear weapons which will be retained by the Powers concerned, even after the conclusion of the implementation of START II, will be higher than the numbers which existed at the time of the Cuban missile crisis.

Finally, the draft resolution does not acknowledge the requirement for multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. We believe that that remains the central objective for negotiations in the field of nuclear disarmament, which should be endorsed by the international community, including all the nuclear-weapon States.

It is for these reasons that we abstained in the voting on this draft resolution.

The Chairman: We now come to cluster 6, confidence-building measures, including transparency in armaments.

(spoke in French)

Does any delegation wish to make a general declaration on this cluster? I see none.

Thanks to the cooperation of the delegation of Algeria, we will now consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1.

I call on the Secretary of the Committee.

Mr. Lin Kuo-Chung (Secretary of the Committee): Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1, entitled "Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa", was introduced by the representative of Cameroon on behalf of States members which are also members of the Economic Community of Central African States, at the 26th meeting of the Committee, on 9 November 1998.

The sponsors of the draft resolution are listed in the revised draft itself. There is a correction to be made regarding the sponsors. The asterisk should follow "Cameroon", and, as noted in the revised text, it signifies "On behalf of the States members which are also members of the Economic Community of Central African States".

In connection with this draft resolution, a statement on programme budget implications submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly is contained in document A/C.1/53/L.63.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I call on the representative of Algeria for an explanation of position before a decision is taken on the draft resolution.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): Please allow me at the outset to say, Mr. Chairman, that it is thanks to the cooperation not only of Algeria but also of a number of other delegations involved with draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1 that the Committee is to take a decision on it this morning.

Consultations have been held in the last few days on this draft resolution, which in its previous forms has traditionally been adopted by consensus. It presented no major difficulties at previous sessions because it did not then contain elements which the sponsors introduced this year for the first time and which we believe should be taken up in other bodies.

The sponsors of the draft resolution feel that the elements contained in the eleventh preambular paragraph and paragraph 8 are important as confidence-building measures. Though my delegation is not opposed to this reasoning, it is almost tempted to ask the sponsors to introduce as confidence-building measures the mitigation of debt, or its elimination, and perhaps the humanization of structural measures applied to many African countries, because they would contribute to the continent's peace and stability.

But, since this is an African draft resolution, and out of solidarity with the countries of Central Africa, Algeria joined the consensus, hoping that the sponsors will next year return to a text more in keeping with the concerns of our Committee: "disarmament and international security". The elements contained in the two paragraphs I have mentioned should be introduced in other bodies, where my delegation would be happy to support them.

My delegation therefore joined the consensus in a spirit of cooperation with the Chair and in view of the very brief time left before the end of our work. If a vote had been requested, my delegation would have abstained on the eleventh preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 8. Though supporting the consensus, my delegation would, in conclusion, like to make it clear that we dissociate ourselves totally from those two paragraphs.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): It is the wish of the sponsors that this draft resolution be adopted without a vote. I see no objection.

Draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1 was adopted.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): Does any delegation wish to explain its position?

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): My delegation supports the main thrust and objective of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1, which has just been adopted. We therefore joined the consensus.

We support the efforts of the countries of the region concerned to enhance peace and security and advance the cause of disarmament there, in accordance with the region's specific characteristics. In this endeavour, we also share in the conviction of the importance and effectiveness of confidence-building measures taken by all States concerned, as such measures will contribute to regional stability and international security. The role of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in

Central Africa has been highlighted in the draft resolution, and we support that.

While supporting the draft resolution in general, my delegation wishes to express some reservations on the last preambular paragraph and on operative paragraph 8, which refer to the proposed establishment of a subregional centre for human rights and democracy. This is a new element which did not appear in the draft resolutions of previous years. As a matter of principle, we believe that this issue does not lie within the purview of the First Committee, and thus the adoption of this draft resolution should not create a precedent for the Committee to deal with such measures, which are outside the framework of its responsibilities. We therefore dissociate ourselves from those two paragraphs.

Finally, my delegation wishes to emphasize again our support for the efforts of the countries of the subregion to promote peace, security and stability in the region, which results from our solidarity with the countries of Central Africa.

Mr. Benítez Verson (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Cuba joined the consensus on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.4/Rev.1, because we think it appropriate to make a clear show of support for the activities of the Standing Advisory Committee of the United Nations on Security Questions in Central Africa.

At the same time, my delegation would like to place on record its reservations with regard to the eleventh preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 8. Our reservations have less to do with their substance than with our opinion that they are completely out of context in this draft resolution. Though we have no doubt regarding the good intentions that led the sponsors to insist on retaining these two paragraphs, Cuba feels that the subjects they cover are dealt with in other Committees, and it is there that delegations should state their views on these subjects.

Organization of work

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As no other delegation wishes to explain its position, we have exhausted the list of draft resolutions on which to take a decision this morning. This afternoon we will take up draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22, which belongs to cluster 1, nuclear weapons.

As Chairman, I would like to propose that general statements on this cluster be limited to one per delegation, and that those general statements be no longer than three minutes.

Is there any objection?

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I understand that general statements on the various clusters are made at almost every meeting of this Committee, and at no previous meeting has there been any desire to limit the number of statements or the time allotted to delegations for statements. I wonder, therefore, Mr. Chairman, why you would wish to limit the number of statements at the next meeting.

Is this a general restriction, relating to all draft resolutions, or is it in connection with any one particular draft resolution or subject that such a restriction is being imposed on delegations? I would like to be clear about that before we take a decision.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): My proposal relates to the discussion on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. Is there any objection?

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): First of all, we have not yet agreed when we will take up draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. We were supposed to take it up this morning, but were unable to do so because of procedural complications which you and I are both aware of, Mr. Chairman. Those procedural complications have been resolved only to a certain extent. Some procedural problems remain, and therefore I do not know whether my delegation will be in a position to take up draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 this afternoon. I think we should first of all decide which draft resolutions we will take up this afternoon, before we move to procedures for restricting the debate on this item.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The representative of Pakistan is calling into question the taking up of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 this afternoon. As Chairman, I consider his statement to be a motion of no action, and I shall put it to the vote.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Since this Committee first began taking action on draft resolutions, it has been the right of any delegation to ask for the postponement of consideration of a draft resolution to a later meeting. Why are you now interpreting my request as a motion of no action, Mr. Chairman? That is not a fair ruling.

I am not asking for no action. I am just asking that until we have resolved the procedural problems of which you and I and many other members of this Committee are well aware, and which we discussed in private, my delegation would reserve the right to ask for a postponement of action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 from this afternoon to a later meeting. That is all I am asking. It is not a no-action motion. Please do not misunderstand or misinterpret me.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Pakistan for his clarification.

Under the circumstances, I propose to suspend this meeting and hold a meeting on procedural questions with interested delegations now in the small room at the back of this room.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): What is happening, Mr. Chairman? We came here to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22, but we understand and take into account the position of the Chairman and the Bureau and therefore decided to take action in the afternoon.

At the beginning, Mr. Chairman, you proposed taking action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 at this afternoon's meeting. You then began to go into the procedure and to limit the time for comments on the draft resolution. The sponsors had asked that no amendments be submitted to it. We are now surprised to see that you are imposing limits on the number and length of statements. First, we all know that the First Committee, not the Chairman or the Bureau, is its own master. Secondly, you, Mr. Chairman, had proposed that the Committee consider the draft resolution this afternoon.

The Ambassador of Pakistan has raised a point worthy of discussion. I am sure that the Bureau and the Office of Legal Affairs can give you appropriate legal advice on that point, Sir. Are we going to consider A/C.1/53/L.22 without time limits? This is a matter under consideration. Any State has the right to speak at any time it wants. We are not explaining the vote. Our understanding of the rules of procedure is that they do not limit the length of statements or the number of speakers.

Moreover, the Bureau's subjecting the Committee to limitations or restrictions is quite unacceptable.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would like to recall that my proposal was just that — a proposal. The Chairman is entitled to make proposals by virtue of rule 106 [35] of the rules of procedure. My proposal had to do only with general statements on cluster 1, nuclear weapons. It had nothing to do with the right of reply, as provided for in the rules of procedure.

Mr. De Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I think we are confusing two different things. One is the question of when draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 will be taken up. Another, quite different, question has to do with the procedure to be followed in considering it. Let us take each question in turn.

We were convened this morning to take action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. A request was made to postpone consideration until this afternoon. The Committee agreed to take up the draft resolution this afternoon, so that decision has already been made.

There is not much time left to us. The consideration of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 and its amendments, beginning this afternoon, will involve lengthy procedures that may take a meeting or two. We have no more meetings scheduled. If when we convene this afternoon there is a proposal to postpone consideration of the draft resolution, the Committee will have to take a decision on that proposal then. We do not have to take that decision now. If the Committee decides to take action on the draft resolution this afternoon, then that is what we will do. The Chairman can then propose limits on the number of speakers and the time granted to them under rule 72 [114] of the rules of procedure. Those are both decisions that we will take this afternoon.

I think the best thing to do now would be to adjourn this meeting.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I would like to recall that when I made the proposal to limit the number of speakers and the time allotted for statements, I felt — and I believe that the entire Bureau agreed — that it was not necessary to call into question the consideration of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. It was only later that consideration of the draft resolution this afternoon was called into question. So it was in good faith and on the understanding shared by all delegations that I made that proposal, in order to spare us a procedural discussion at the beginning of the afternoon.

We will now hold the procedural meeting that I announced and see whether the delegations that called into question the consideration of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 this afternoon can be satisfied and have their questions resolved.

Mr. Mesdoua (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation also shares in the surprise at hearing that there is to be a meeting confined to delegations concerned about the question. It seems to me that the small room adjoining this conference room is too small to hold all the delegations interested in this draft resolution; in my view, there are 185 delegations interested in it.

This is an important draft resolution. I understand that consultations have already taken place between several interested delegations and the Chairman, but that they did not have satisfactory results. I believe that — for the future and because of the importance of such a draft resolution — if procedural questions arise and the opinions of States must be sought, there is a basis for not limiting consultations to a number of interested delegations. And even if all interested delegations were asked to participate in the consultations, it would be physically impossible, due to the narrow and cramped nature of the room. If consultations are to be held on procedural matters, it seems to me that this conference room itself is the most appropriate place, so that all delegations may put forward their views, or at least know what is to happen this afternoon, and not be taken by surprise.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I just want to make a couple of points. I think that perhaps most delegations are aware, Mr. Chairman, that you had made an effort to try to reach a pre-agreement on the methods by which we would take action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 and the amendments. That effort did not succeed, because there were differences of opinion and interpretation among the delegations concerned. We had agreed that we would hold further consultations before we prescribed the procedures for the consideration of that draft resolution.

My delegation therefore was surprised that a part of the procedure should be prescribed without the consultations we expected would be held this morning, and it is for that reason that we have raised an objection. I believe that it may be the best thing to hold those consultations first, to agree on the ground rules and make sure that those ground rules are fair to everyone concerned, and thereafter to proceed to action. But we cannot now say that we will prescribe only part of the procedure and leave the rest of it to be debated in the Committee.

That is my approach. I believe that if it is your desire, Mr. Chairman, to try to reach agreement on the process by which we will take action, certainly my delegation is willing, as we always have been, to participate in that process and to reach a fair agreement. But we do not want to be surprised with procedural manoeuvres which are designed to deny us our rights.

Mr. Aamiry (Jordan): My intervention is to seek clarification, Mr. Chairman. I understood that if a delegation wished to postpone action on a draft resolution, it could ask you. You made it clear that you would like it if they could ask you this in advance — if possible 48 or 24 hours in advance — but that if on the spur of the moment they wished to ask for a postponement, they could. You accommodated this request previously. My understanding is that when we come to this afternoon's meeting, it will still be the right of any delegation to ask for postponement of action on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. Is this correct?

The Chairman: My answer is yes, but I appeal strongly to all delegations, in the interest of us all, not to do so. I respect the rules of procedure, but there is also a question of efficiency and courtesy vis-à-vis all the other delegations.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 12.50 p.m.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): As I said during the informal meeting, I will now ask the Committee to take a decision on my proposal to limit general statements to one statement per delegation and to five minutes per statement. Are there any objections?

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): This applies only to general statements, and general statements this afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): There being no objection, it is so decided.

That being the case, we will meet again at 3 p.m. today to consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. Are there any objections?

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): I have no objection, Mr. Chairman. I would only note that we have not yet agreed on the process by which we will take up draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22. I believe we should have a clear idea how we will take it up, and I would hope that perhaps at the beginning of our meeting this afternoon you, Mr.

Chairman, would be in a position to tell us how, following the general statements, we will proceed to consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22 — that is, the statements, the introduction of the amendments, explanations of vote and the vote itself. We would expect that you would outline that procedure for us so that we might proceed in an orderly fashion.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): The procedure I foresee is that there would be general statements. Then we would consider the various amendments in chronological order, the order in which they were submitted.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): My understanding is that, as we discussed in the informal meeting, we would first have general statements on the nuclear cluster, then general statements on draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22, the introduction of amendments and responses to them. That would be followed by action on the amendments, whatever that action may be, and then action on the draft resolution.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I have no problem at all with that view. I would like only to add that at this time I am only familiar with the written amendments before the First Committee. Of course, other amendments are always possible, and they will be considered

(*spoke in English*)

in due time.

(*spoke in French*)

On that basis, is the Committee prepared to reconvene at 3 p.m. to consider draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.22, "Nuclear testing"? There being no objection, it is so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.